

Perak the Arrow-Chosen.

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In *J. R. A. S., S. B.* 1, p. 85, Sir William Maxwell translates an extract from the *Marong Mahawangsa* or "Kedah Annals," of which the original may be read on p. 62 of *Journal* 72 (1916). It relates a Kedah claim that Raja Marong Mahapodisat founded Perak, selecting the site of its capital by loosing a silver (*perak*) arrow called Indra Sakti and building a town on the island where it fell. As related in my "History of Kedah," the only island in Perak known to have borne that name was named and settled by Sultan Iskandar who ascended the Perak throne in 1765 A.D. (Vide *Misa Melayu*, published in the "Malay Literature Series," Singapore 1919). But admitting the absurdity of the legend, whence did a Malay chronicler get the non-Malayan idea of choosing a site by loosing an arrow, a weapon seldom or never employed by people of his race, into trackless forests?

In 2 Kings, chapter 13, verses 14-17 there is the story of how Elisha bade Joash the king of Israel shoot an arrow eastward out of the window, "the arrow of the lord's deliverance from Syria." The shooting of an arrow to determine a site was practised by the Persians in Sassanian times. The Haji-abad inscription (Martin Haug's "Introductory Essay on the Pahlavi Language" prefixed to Dastur Hoshangji Jamaspji Asa's "Old Pahlavi—Pazand Glossary," Bombay and London 1870) gives one instance. Again Tabari the famous Persian historian (b. A.D. 839-d. A.D. 923) tells us that when the Persian general Wahriz, the conqueror and governor of Yemen, felt his death approaching, he called for his bow and arrows, bade his retainers raise him up and shot an arrow into the air, commanding those who stood by to mark where it fell and to build a mausoleum for his body there. (Nöldeke's "Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden," Leyden, 1879, pp. 263-264). This story is also related by the Arabian historian Dinawari (ed. Guirgass 1888, p. 66). The practice continued into Muhammadan times and was used by the Arabs as well as the Persians as is shown by a passage in al-Baladhuri's *Kitabu futuḥil-buldan* (ed. de Goeje, p. 276.)

Evidently in this Kedah legend we meet another instance of Malay indebtedness to Persian models, such as is seen in the introduction to the *Sĕjarah Mĕlayu* (Wilkinson's "Malay Literature" I, p. 18) and in the introduction of the same type to the "Kedah Annals."